1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4

The
492 saddles used by the women are the same as
[237] those of the men, except that the former, more studious of external elegance, have theirs made of the skin of a white cow. When an Abiponian woman wants to mount her horse, she throws herself up to the middle upon its neck, like men in Europe, and then separating her feet on both sides, places herself in the saddle, which has no cushion; nor does the hardness of it offend her in journeys of many
[142] days; from which you may perceive that the skin of the Abipones is harder than leather, being rendered callous by their constantly riding without a cushion. Indians who ride much and long without saddles, frequently hurt and wound the horse's back, without receiving
484 any injury themselves. I will now describe
492 their manner of travelling when they remove from one place to another. The wife, besides
[482] her husband's bow and quiver, carries all the domestic furniture, all the pots, gourds, jugs, shells, balls of woollen and linen thread, weaving instruments, &c. These things are con-
[854] tained in boar-skin bags, suspended here and there from the saddle; where she also places the whelps, and her young infant if she have one. Besides these things, she suspends from the sides of the saddle a large mat, with two
[501] poles, to fix a tent wherever they like, and a bull's hide to serve for a boat in crossing rivers.

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

of their tent, that the waters may flow off, and be carried elsewhere. They generally send a tame mare with a bell about her neck to a drove of horses, when they are sent to pasture; for they will never go out of sight of her, and if dispersed up and down the plain, through fear of a tiger, return to her as to their mother; on which account the Spaniards call this mare *la madrina*, and the Abipones, *latè*, which means a mother. For the same reason, on a few of the horses they place shackles of soft leather, that they may crop the grass without wandering far from the tent, and be at hand, if it be found necessary to travel in the night. Not only the men, but even very young women cross rivers without ford, bridge, or boat, by swimming. The children, the saddles, and other luggage are sent over on a bull's hide, called by the Abipones, *ñatatè*, and by the Spaniards, *la pelota*, and generally made use of in crossing the smaller rivers. I will describe the rude structure of it. A hairy, raw, and entirely undressed hide is made almost square, by having the extremities of the feet and neck cut off. The four sides are raised like a hat, to the height of about two spans, and each is tied with a thong, that they may remain erect, and preserve their squareness of form. At the bottom of the pelota, the saddles and other luggage are

1:Dobrizhoffer M-S (ca. 1760) 1822
SI4 Abipon SI4

thrown by way of ballast, in the midst of which the person that is to cross the river, sits, taking care to preserve his balance. Into a hole in the side of the pelota, they insert a thong instead of a rope, which a person, swimming, lays hold of with his teeth and with one hand, whilst he uses the other for an oar, and thus gently draws the pelota along the river, without shaking or endangering the person within in the least, though a high wind may have greatly agitated the waves. If the coldness of the water cramps the man that drags the pelota, so that he is disenabled from swimming, and would otherwise be drowned, he will be carried safely along with the pelota to the opposite bank, by the force of the waves. If rivers of a wider channel and a more rapid stream are to be crossed, the swimmer holds the tail of the horse, which swims before, with one hand, to support himself, and drags the pelota with the other. In so many and such long journies, I practised this sort of navigation almost daily, and not unfrequently repeated it often on the same day. At first it appeared very formidable and dangerous to me. But instructed by frequent practice, I have often laughed at myself and my imaginary danger, and always preferred a hide in crossing a river, to a tottering skiff or boat, which is constantly liable to be

1:Dobrizhoffer M-5 (ca. 1760) 1822
514 Abipon 514

overturned. If many days' rain has wetted the hide, and made it as soft as linen, boughs of trees are placed under the four sides, and the bottom of the pelota, which supports the hide, and strengthens it to cross the river in safety. American captains of Spanish soldiers will not swim, although they know how, that they may not be obliged to strip before their men. To reach, therefore, the opposite shore, they sit upon a pelota, which, scorning the assistance of another person, they impel forwards by two forked boughs for oars.

The Abipones enter even the larger rivers on horseback: but when the ford begins to fail, they leap from their horse into the water. With their right hand they hold the reins of the horse, and row with the same; in their left they grasp a very wide spear, at the end of which they suspend their clothes in the air, that they may not be wetted. Every now and then they give the horse a blow, if he suffers himself to be carried down with the stream, to bring him back to the right course, and make him strain to the appointed part of the opposite shore, which should be neither marshy nor weedy, nor of a very high bank, so that it may afford an easy ascent. It was laughable to see the crowds of savages swimming at my side, with nothing but their heads above water, yet conversing as plea-